



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Robert M. Summers, Ph.D.
Deputy Secretary

March 2, 2010

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair
Members, Environmental Matters Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 993: Vehicle Laws – Use of Wireless Communication Devices - Prohibition

Dear Chairperson McIntosh & Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on House Bill 993 which would prohibit the use of a text messaging device while operating a motor vehicle under certain circumstances and prohibit the use of a wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle. MDE recognizes and agrees that the use of these devices can present a real safety issue for the driver using the device as well as other drivers. However, the Department is concerned that the inability to use these devices would greatly impede the communications ability of our Emergency Response staff when reporting to emergencies and addressing these issues accordingly.

If House Bill 993 were to specifically exempt official emergency staff like our Emergency Responders, and allow the use of use of these devices during emergency situations, it would better serve our staff and other similar positions as they perform these types of critical functions. This bill should not apply to communications between emergency service workers during the performance of their duties.

Thank you for allowing us to express our opinion related to House Bill 993. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me at 410-260-6301.

Sincerely,

Lisa Nissley
Legislative Liaison

CC. Heather Barthel
Susan Scotto